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ABSTRACT

In a brief response to other papers presented as part of a symposium entitled "What's So Canadian About Canadian Educational Administration," at the 1978 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, the author argues against seeing Canada as merely an extension of the United States, or seeing his own Quebec as merely an extension of Canada. Differences between these regions exist for social, cultural, historical, political, geographical, and even psychological reasons, and any attempt to ignore those differences will cause problems. The different regions can serve, however, as proving grounds for testing theories of educational administration, and, by working within their own appropriate sociocultural frameworks, can help expand the base on which administrative knowledge is built. (Author/PGD)

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WHAT'S SO CANADIAN ABOUT CANADIAN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION?

by

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A Paper Presented As A Discussant to the A.E.R.A. Symposium

"WHAT'S SO CANADIAN ABOUT CANADIAN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION?"

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I have been asked to discuss the papers just presented from the viewpoint of a Quebecer and I think I will be talking for the Francophones as well as for the Anglophones. This is what I am going to do for a few minutes but I would also like to discuss them as a Canadian since I still feel like being one. First, I would like to make a remark, and please see not harm in this; you see, unlike most of the members of this panel, I am not a graduate from either Alberta or Chicago. Thus, my remarks will have a different perspective.

All papers in one way or another stressed differences within Canada and between Canada and the U.S. My suspicion is that the Province of Quebec is not so much included in those papers and I don't want to blame the authors. Who else can better understand Quebec than a Quebecer? I guess in many ways the same thing may be said for each province.

A Quebecer's perspective cannot be understood without reinforcing differences between Quebec and other Canadian Provinces. As Norman Henchey says: "The French-speaking Quebecer was once defined by his attachment to tradition, his allegiance to the Church, his elitist view of society, his distrust of change, and his detachment from the economic life of the continent" (1972, p.95). The Quiet Revolution of the early 1960's in Quebec compared to the Quiet Evolution in Ontario described by Harris (1967) brought up a new definition;

namely, "concern for the present, adherence to a secular and political ethic, an egalitarian view of society, a commitment to change, and engagement in the technology and economics of the post-industrial state" (Henchey, 1972, p.95). All these changes in eighteen years.

Where do you find in the United States or in Canada a school council, required by the State or the Province, which has to be elected each year in September from among the members of the teaching staff? Where can you find a statewide 195 page negotiated agreement plus a local agreement? California seems to want to achieve statewide collective bargaining (Dunlop, 1978). They should look at what happened in Quebec during the past few years. Isherwood contends that "Of the ten Provinces in Canada, Quebec has probably had the most tumultuous doings in labour-management relations over the past decade" (1978, p32). These two examples are good examples of the fact that the Province of Quebec is not a Province like the others.

I agree with Donald Erickson that Canada has found different strategies as a way of protecting itself from destructive American influences. In that, Quebec is far from being an exception. Edward Hickcox says that in 1967 influential educators were concerned about American influence and that "the situation in 1978 seems to have changed considerably and in the direction of decreased concern with the issue" (p.8).

This is not true for Quebec. During our Quiet Revolution even today, a graduate from an American University is not welcome for fear that he might suggest ideas coming from the States. As Orkilow points out models from the Canadian context were rarely available. There is no doubt that, for example, our school district reorganization in Quebec has been Imbued with the American model. Team teaching, open area schools, polyvalent high schools, (comprehensive high schools in the States) and the up-coming competency based teacher education are other examples of transplanted innovations from the United States. When you think that these innovations have been more or less a failure, how can you expect Quebecers not to be allergic to American ideas?

I am still encountering, Donald, many graduates who do not like to read materials coming from the States and I agree with you, Edward, that Canadian writers do not have the market to motivate extensive production of high quality Canadian works. However, we should publish books with a wider Canadian perspective than the two texts recently brought out by Giles (1974) and by Gue (1977). I am wondering how many professors in educational administration in Canada applied to the Canada Council for a grant for scholarly books? In Quebec, the Government has just decided to help the financing of book publishing. When a professor uses a French book, his students will get a 30% rebate on the book.

Edward Hickcox mentions the interesting tie-in between Alberta and the University of Chicago.There was a tie-in between Alberta and the University of Montreal and Laval University in the early 1960's. It is interesting to note that just as Quebec was protecting itself from American ideas so was it protecting itself from anything coming from Alberta. This was the same kind of schizophrenic relationship that Canadian administration had with American education as is mentioned by Orkilow.

I agree with Hickcox that we have difficulty in building national associations because of the lack of national focus in education. However, I do not agree with him that we should not be squandering our energies in creating those organizations. I think that the creation of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education has been a great idea. Similarly, the creation of the Canadian Association for the Study of Educational Administration in 1973 has been a fine idea. I have been a member of AERA since 1970 and I haven't been acquainted with Canadian Educational Administration professors through AERA meetings but rather through CASEA.

I am willing to maintain American contacts from a professional viewpoint through AERA or Phi Delta Kappa for example. To take an expression dear to Quebecers those days, I do not want to be colonized. At the risk of being accused of being particularistic, I would still argue for Canadian professors

and content. Much of our teaching of educational administration is directed to potential or actual school administrators. If only to make educational administration more understandable and useful to them, some content ought to be Canadian.

This does not seem to me to be in contradiction with what the members of the panel are suggesting, namely, that we should use our differences with United States, to extend existing bodies of theory and making knowledge even more universal. I agree with you that some flow of ideas and individuals across the border should be maintained. As a matter of fact, I will argue that Canada may be a good research laboratory for the United States. But, do not forget that Quebec might be a good research setting for the other Provinces too.

I question the Canadian value system proposed by Hickcox. How can one be sure that the United States may be characterized by more "adaptive values" than Canada. How can an officially bilingual country where publicly supported denominational schools still exist in some places and where ethnocultural groups are fighting to preserve their cultures be said to be less adaptive than the American melting-pot? To be adaptive, do people all need to be the same? One could still legitimately wonder whether or not American educational philosophies, programs, and practices are always suited to Canadian educational needs. (Decore, 1976, p.6).

I am shocked by the proposal that the 49th parallel

should not be physical nor an educational divide, between the United States and Canada. At the risk again of becoming particularistic and maybe somewhat emotional, I am contending that you are still going to have for a good while a political and psychological divide between both countries. The need for Canada to differentiate itself from the United States will not melt away just because of the willingness for good relationships between Canadians and Americans.

Furthermore, I find that kind of proposition as being the result of an acculturation phenomenon. I heard many times the same comment during my three years in Buffalo and when I came back to Montreal I was thinking and behaving as an American. I even surprised myself by proposing in private conversations that Quebec should become an American state. I was myself acculturated. Last February, 714 citizens in Quebec, francophones and anglophones, were asked whether or not they felt that Quebec should become an American state. 78.2% said no, 12.2% said yes and 9.6% undecided.

This "no border" attitude towards Canada has already been described by Douglas Le Pan, a former Canadian diplomat. He once called upon a U.S. senator to discuss the building of a bridge across one of the rivers along the border. The senator said: "You know, I have never been able to see why there should be a border between us at all, our two countries are so much alike" (Le Pan, 1964, 155). Because Americans come to Canada

in the summer for fishing, in the fall for hunting, and in the winter for skiing, they frequently think of Canada as a northern extension of their own country (Lipset, 1964, P. 183). Hughes in 1964 wrote: "English Canadians seem to assume that French Canada will go away, that it won't always be French". Remember now what happened in November 1976 when the Parti Quebecois party was elected in Quebec. Hughes continued: "Americans seem to imply, by many words and deeds, that Canada will not always be Canada". For many reasons, Americans have difficulty understanding the Canadian perspective in Canada.

As Decore is proposing for the sociologists of education, I really think that in order for American educational administration professors to study Canadian education they must have at least some knowledge of the sociohistorical and political background of Canada. I agree with my former associate dean at the University of Montreal, André Brassard, when he said: "It is also necessary, as far as francophone communities are concerned, to practice vis-à-vis American influences what Guy Rocher calls "the critical attraction." Educational administration cannot as a discipline stand away from other administrative sciences. It cannot either be ignorant of the American fertility of ideas. But in order to solve problems of educational systems, educational administration must spread out in taking into account regional disparities be they cultural political, historical or geographical" (1974, p.15).

I think that when we look at our unique Canadian features what counts is not so much the question "so what?" put forward by Erickson, but the question "why so?"

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